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FACTS AND OBSERVATIONS

CONCERNING THE

ORGANIZATION AND STATE OF THE CHURCHES

IN THE

THREE SYNODS OF WESTERN NEW-YORK,

AND THE

SYNOD OF WESTERN RESERVE.

BY JAMES WOOD.

SARATOGA SPRINGS :

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NOTICE.

If I have committed any material error in the statistics of the several Presbyteries, those who may be acquainted with the facts, are requested to communicate to the public the necessary corrections. It will not be considered strange that I have fallen into some mistakes by those who shall be made acquainted with the following fact. I asked the stated clerk of the Synod of Western Reserve how many Congregational and how many Presbyterian churches there are in the Presbytery of Huron. He wrote on a slip of paper 14 Congregational and 10 Presbyterian. Finding by the last report of that Presbytery to the General Assembly that they have but 23 churches, I put it down 13 Congregational and 10 Presbyterian. But since the pamphlet was ready for the press, that Presbytery have published a statement in which they say they have 25 churches, 15 of which are Presbyterian and 10 Congregational. Have they received 2 churches since the meeting of the last Assembly? Have several of the Congregational churches elected ruling elders during the past summer? or was the stated clerk of that Synod mistaken? I shall of course have it printed according to the statement of the Presbytery—but I mention it to shew how liable we are to err; and that if I have committed an error in any instance, (which is quite possible,) it has been owing to the misstatements of those upon whom I have relied for information.

FACTS AND OBSERVATIONS.

WHILE on a visit in August last to the western part of the state of New-York, I embraced the opportunity of obtaining facts concerning the organization and state of the churches; and believing them to be of special interest at the present time, I shall communicate them to the public. But in quite a number of instances my information has been so *general*, as to be less satisfactory than I could desire, especially in regard to the present *organization* of many of the churches, concerning which (though I have made inquiries of different persons and corresponded with others) I have not been able to obtain *definite* information. If, therefore, I shall make any statements which are not entirely accurate, those who may be acquainted with the facts, will do me and the church a favor by communicating the necessary corrections; and in those cases, where I shall be obliged, from the want of information, to be very general, I trust that those who are able will not be backward in supplying the deficiency. I cordially respond to the remark of Dr. Penny, at the Auburn Convention, that all which a full and candid statement of facts can do for those Synods, I wish to have done; and no more.

We shall begin with the

Synod of Utica.

This Synod was constituted in 1829, by a division of the Synod of Albany, and consists of 5 Presbyteries, viz. Oneida, Watertown, Otsego, St. Lawrence and Oswego. To prevent confusion, it must be remembered that Watertown and St. Lawrence do not bear the names by which they were first organized. The former was then called St. Law-

rence and the latter Ogdensburg. St. Lawrence received the name of Watertown in 1828, and not long after Ogdensburg took the name of St. Lawrence.

The Presbytery of Oneida was constituted by an act of the General Assembly in 1802, from the Presbytery of Albany, and consisted of six ministers. No churches are named; but from an examination of the Statistical Reports of the Presbytery of Albany up to that time, it will appear that there were five or six embraced in the territory assigned to the new Presbytery. In 1803, they reported 17 churches, eight of which are now and probably were then Presbyterian. Concerning the remainder, I am not informed. In 1805, they reported 20 churches, 2 of which are known to have been Congregational; and of course must have been received on the plan of 1801. The next year they reported but 8. The others had been detached from the Presbytery to form the Presbytery of Geneva, which was constituted that year. One of the 8 is named as a Congregational church. From this time there was a gradual increase till 1816, when the Presbytery was again divided and a new Presbytery constituted by the name of St. Lawrence, [now Watertown.] But their loss from this source was much more than made up by the reception in 1819, of 12 ministers and 9 congregations. All the ministers except one were from Congregational Associations; and all the churches, it is believed, were Congregational. This large accession was owing to the dissolution of the Oneida Association, which, according to the statement of a person who was then a member of one of their churches, was an interesting and flourishing body; but as the plan of union opened the door for their admission into the Presbyterian church, and as the ministers were desirous of forming such a connection, the people were persuaded to yield. Their Association was accordingly dissolved, and most of the ministers and churches joined the Presbytery—constituting, after their reception, about one third of the whole body.

The same year (1819) the Presbytery was divided again, and a new one organized by the name of Otsego. But dur-

ing the three following years, their number was once more repaired by the reception of nine churches, nearly all of which, we have good reason to believe, were Congregational. This increased the proportion of Congregationalists from one third to about one half—making due allowance for the few who, upon joining the Presbytery, appointed ruling elders. There was now (1822) another division of the Presbytery, and a new one constituted by the name of Oswego. This diminished the proportion of Congregational churches to nearly the same as it was in 1819, which has been retained without much variation ever since. There are now 40 churches, 12 or 14 of which are Congregational. This I state on the authority of one of their members, corroborated by several others who are acquainted with the churches in their bounds.

The Presbytery of Watertown was constituted (under the name of St. Lawrence) in 1816—consisting of 5 ministers and 2 congregations, viz. Ogdensburg and Martinsburg. In 1819, they reported to the General Assembly 4 Presbyterian churches and 7 Congregational; or if 2 of the latter, which are reported under one pastoral charge, were distinct churches, as was the case a few years afterwards, then 4 Presbyterian and 8 Congregational. The proportion of Congregationalists at the present time is probably less; but the information which I have received on this point is so general, that I cannot speak with precision.*

The Otsego Presbytery was organized in 1819, and was composed of seven ministers and 5 congregations, viz. Cherry Valley, Cooperstown, Springfield, Milford and Eaton. Three of them, we believe, were Presbyterian, and two

* In a communication, published in several of the papers during the past summer, (supposed to have been written by a member of that Presbytery,) it is stated that there are 2 or 3 Congregational churches under the care of that Presbytery; but as the person to whom I wrote, has not given me the desired information, in my summary of the Presbyteries, I shall leave it blank.

Congregational. According to a statement made at the Auburn Convention, they are now about equally divided.*

The Presbytery of St. Lawrence (under the name of Ogdensburg) was constituted by a division of the Presbytery of Champlain in 1821, consisting of six ministers and the congregations in a certain district; but how many there were, it is not stated. The next year they reported 11 congregations, a majority of which, we believe, were Congregational. The ground for this opinion is the following: The Presbytery of Champlain, from which it was formed, was constituted in 1813, but on account of the war they did not meet; and the next year, a new order was obtained from the Synod. Their first report in 1815 mentions only one congregation. That section of the state was wholly missionary ground. Many of the churches were organized by an excellent and laborious Congregational missionary, whom I have heard relate many thrilling incidents concerning his labors, his discouragements and his success. Some of the churches which he formed were, perhaps, Presbyterian; but the major part were, undoubtedly, Congregational. And when in process of time they became sufficiently numerous, several of the churches were detached from the Presbytery and a new one was organized, which is now called St. Lawrence. As the brother to whom I wrote for information concerning this Presbytery has not answered my letter, I do not know of what materials it is composed at the present time.

The Oswego Presbytery was organized in 1822, consisting of 5 ministers and the congregations in the north-western section of the Presbytery of Oneida. Their number is not stated. Their first report was in 1825, when they consisted of 8 ministers and 16 congregations—a large proportion of which, there can be but little doubt, were Congregation-

* In the resolutions lately adopted by the Baltimore Presbytery it was stated, that at the Auburn Convention one of the members declared that there are in this Presbytery 17 Congregational churches and 8 Presbyterian. This statement was made not concerning Otsego Presbytery, but Oswego.

al. According to a statement made by one of their members at the Auburn Convention, they have now 17 Congregational churches and 8 Presbyterian.

The result of the whole will be as follows :

Oneida,	40 churches,	27 Presbyterian and	13 Congregational.
Watertown,	23 churches,		
Otsego,	16 churches,	8 Presbyterian and	8 Congregational.
St. Lawrence,	11 churches,		
Oswego,	25 churches,	8 Presbyterian and	17 Congregational.
Total, as far as known,		<u>43</u>	<u>38</u>

The preferences of the people in very many cases, and of *some* of the ministers, are strongly in favor of Congregationalism. One of the members of the Auburn Convention, from the Oswego Presbytery, is known to be so decidedly a Congregationalist in his principles and feelings, that a minister acquainted with his views expressed surprise that he should have been willing to be a delegate to that body.

About a year ago, at a meeting in which 7 of the churches belonging to that presbytery had united for their spiritual benefit, (4 of which were Congregational and 3 Presbyterian,) he introduced a proposal that they should leave the Presbytery and join a Congregational Association ; and another minister who was present advocated the measure. It was accordingly adopted, and a committee was appointed to attend a meeting of the Oneida Association and propose a union with them ; or, if this should be found not to be so much for their advantage, then to draft a plan for forming a separate Association by themselves ; but as yet nothing farther has been done. Had the proposition been carried into effect agreeably to the vote, instead of there being 8 Presbyterian churches in that presbytery, there would be only 5. Probably all the churches in the presbytery except 2, would prefer the Congregational mode of government, and be at least equally well satisfied to form a connection with a Congregational Association.

When the Oneida Association was dissolved, 18 or 20 years ago, some of the churches, upon joining the Presbytery of Oneida, appointed ruling elders ; but as soon as they

saw how the system worked, they became dissatisfied, and heart-burnings and distractions have existed in the churches, more or less, ever since. In one church, some of the members left and joined the Methodists; in three or four others, they separated and formed two churches; and in others difficulties, more or less serious, have disturbed their peace. One church, only a few months ago, after making material alterations in their Articles of Faith, resolved to leave the Presbytery and join a Congregational Association; and another, it is expected, will soon follow their example, except that they have not departed (so far as I learned) from any of the important doctrines of the gospel. The Presbytery attempted to discipline the former church, but nothing could be done because it is Congregational. We hope no one will infer, from any thing we have said or may say concerning Congregationalism in these churches, that we wish to bring any charge against it, or impute it to any man as a fault. We wish only to state facts as they exist, with the view of shewing how the churches are organized, and what have been the effects of the plan of union upon their peace and prosperity. The brother to whom I am indebted for much of my information concerning the Oneida Presbytery, believes that the plan of union has been one cause of the unsettled state of things both in that Presbytery and in other parts of Western New-York; and that the peace and union of many of the churches would be greatly promoted if they should become Congregationalists in full.

We will now state a few things in relation to doctrines and measures. If we were to speak only in general terms, we might introduce a few sentences concerning each of the Presbyteries, which would convey to the mind of the reader some idea of the views and feelings that prevail among them. But as we do not wish to incur the charge of circulating vague reports, which on investigation may prove to be unfounded, we shall specify some particulars. To avoid producing a false impression we will premise, that we do not mean to apply the facts which we communicate to all the members of the several Presbyteries composing this

Synod—and we wish this remark to be remembered by the reader in perusing what we may write concerning the other Synods. There is probably a majority in all these bodies who are opposed to those *extreme* views in doctrine, and those *extravagant* measures which are entertained and practised by some of their number. But their *existence* among them shews there is cause for alarm; and the length of time in which they have prevailed affords proof of a culpable lenity on the part of those who disapprove of them, in not bringing their abettors (except in a few instances) under ecclesiastical censure.

During my excursion I had an interview with a layman of some intelligence and standing in society, who, until a short time past, has been a member for 10 or 12 years, of one of the churches in Oneida Presbytery, but is now connected with a church in the Presbytery of Oswego. He said he believed Adam sinned, because God could not prevent him without altering his plan of government. I replied, If God could not prevent Adam from falling, can he keep christians from falling? He answered, No; if they resolve not to be influenced by the motives which he presents to encourage them to persevere. I believe christians may fall away. He said he did not believe in the imputation of Adam's sin, or that we are born sinners—but that when we are born we are destitute of moral character. In regard to conversion, he said, there are some things which God cannot do for the sinner—they are the sinner's own acts, and not God's. He commands the sinner to repent and make to himself a new heart, and he can do it if he *will*. He was told he can do it by the assistance of God's Spirit. He replied, I will not say this, though I admit the Holy Spirit has an agency in the conversion of the sinner. He was asked what kind of agency? Just such an agency, said he, as I should exert over you, in persuading you to go to Rome. I observed to him, You might *fail* in attempting to persuade me to go to Rome. So may God fail, said he, of the conversion of the sinner. God is as dependent upon

the sinner in his conversion as the sinner is upon God. The moment in which a sinner is converted, he said, he is holy—he is right—he is just as God requires him to be; he loves God with all the heart and soul and strength and mind, and he might continue in this state if he *would*; but he yields to temptation and so falls into sin. By loving God with all the heart, he said, he meant not the heart of a man but of a child; and hence he is to grow in grace. When he is converted he is free from sin, and by growing in grace he meant that he becomes stronger, more firmly established, &c. I asked him if the church to which he formerly belonged held as he did. He answered, Yes. And does the minister* of that church believe and preach so? He replied, Yes; I have had long conversations with him, and have met with no body that so nearly accords with my sentiments as he does, except brother ——.† I asked him whether another church, which I named, entertained the same doctrinal views as the church to which he belonged. He said, Not altogether; but they differ more particularly in regard to measures than to doctrine. The latter are in favor of having females pray in promiscuous assemblies—the former are opposed to it.

A week or two previous to this conversation, this man had been received, by letter, as a member of a Presbyterian church, and the session of that church (they had no pastor) were acquainted with his sentiments. One of the elders is said to be favorable to them, a second is thoroughly orthodox, and the other stands somewhere between the two; but the second with whom I conversed did not feel at liberty to object to his admission, because he came with “clean papers” from a church in connection with our body.

Perfectionism exists, to some extent, in several churches

* He is a Congregationalist.

† The brother to whom I suppose he referred was a member of the Auburn Convention, and in a speech which he made expressed gratitude that there was such a man in the General Assembly as Col. Jessup, to defend the churches in Western New-York against the charges of heresy which had been slanderously raised concerning them.

in the Oswego Presbytery. In one of them it prevails to such a degree that their pastor, after endeavoring, in vain, for several months, to resist the current, has given up in discouragement and removed to another congregation. It is not countenanced, so far as I could learn, by any of the ministers; but I infer, from the following remarks, that it is regarded with *some* favor by a considerable number of the people, not only in that Presbytery but in the other Presbyteries belonging to this Synod. I asked a minister, who is preaching to a large congregation in the Presbytery of Oswego, what had been the effect of Mr. Finney's measures in that section of the state. He said it would have been good, if there had been no *opposition* made to them; that his *measures* never did any harm; they were wise and proper, and well adapted to the times; but several newspapers were established with a view of throwing odium upon him, and thus much hurt was done. He alluded, he said, to the Utica Christian Journal, the Albany Telegraph and Boston Telegraph. I asked him whether Mr. Finney would be as cordially received now, in those places where he formerly preached, as he was then? He said, Not in *all* of them, because he now advances certain doctrines which he did not at that time; [he referred to the report, which was then current, that Mr. Finney had become a Perfectionist;] but, he added, *in a large number of places he would be received as cordially as he was then.*

But though the *ministers* are all opposed (it is probable) to perfectionism, *some* of them, in each of the Presbyteries, embrace the New-Haven Theology. In several of them we could specify individuals who are known to be favorable to that system; and in regard to others we have authority for saying that the views of Dr. Taylor are more or less prevalent. But as we do not intend (as we said before) to become the retailer of general and intangible rumors, we shall refer to a particular case. In the spring of 1833, I became acquainted with a licentiate of a Congregational Association, who was desirous of entering the Presbyterian church. After conversing with him for an hour, I told him

frankly but kindly, that I hoped he never would seek admission into our church; that, in my opinion, a man entertaining his views could not, with propriety, subscribe our Standards, &c. Shortly afterwards he was ordained by an Association, and settled over a church connected with us on the accommodation plan, in the Presbytery of Watertown. He is now a member of the Presbytery of Oneida. Soon after his ordination, he wrote a letter to a friend of mine, of which the following is an extract. The letter is dated Sept. 30, 1833. He writes, "I am now over the church at ———, having received a call a few weeks since. It is a Presbyterian church, or rather on the 'accommodating' plan." "I am surrounded by ministers, and have no difficulty in exchanging desks. Here are two near me, who are limited atonement men, I believe, who are very shy. O my dear brother, beware of that doctrine of a limited atonement. I hope I do not go too far, when I say it had its rise from the devil. Mr. Wood of Amsterdam, I have understood, is decidedly on the old school platform." "It is astonishing that, at the present day of light and knowledge, men's understandings should be so blinded. For my part I am awfully prejudiced against the old school divinity. I cannot invite a man to preach for me, whose doctrines are so utterly repugnant to the word of God. I do not here speak of Mr. Wood at all, but of a certain class of men, such, for instance, as the individuals near me." "Dr. Sprague, of Albany, I mean, and old Dr. Green of Philadelphia, and Dr. Griffin,* and Miller, and Alexander, &c. Have you seen Dr. Sprague's [of Albany] book on revivals? O, I am afraid that that man will ruin souls in hell by that pernicious book. My motto is, 'Touch not, taste not, handle not.' I want you candidly to answer the following questions. Do you believe infants have a moral character? Are we to be accountable for the moral act of our first parents? What do you think of the New-Haven Theology? Do you acquiesce

* Dr. Griffin was probably included in this category because he had published a work on Divine Efficiency.

in Dr. Taylor's notions? Do you consider them agreeable with the Scriptures? His divinity is spreading very widely. For my part, I do not believe there is any perfect system of Theology but the Divine Oracles." . . . "I am really glad that — has commenced his studies." . . . "I hope he will not imbibe the principles of the Princeton Divinity. That is a good seminary, but the doctrines are not calculated for building up the Redeemer's kingdom as others are."

Whether the state of things is better now than it was five years ago, I am not competent to decide. In Oneida Presbytery I have been assured that it is. There has been an almost entire change of ministers there within a few years, and a majority of them are disposed to do all in their power to correct the errors of the past. At their meeting in June last, a resolution was adopted to call to account two or three of their members, who had been moving for some time past like "wandering stars," in very irregular orbits. We trust they will be successful in their efforts, and restore the character of that Presbytery to what it was when it was first organized.

Synod of Geneva.

This Synod was constituted by a division of the Synod of Albany, in 1812. It then consisted of three Presbyteries, viz. Geneva, Cayuga and Onondaga, to which the following have since been added: Bath, Cortland, Chenango, Tioga, Delaware and Chemung. The Presbytery of Geneva was formed from a part of the Presbytery of Oneida, in 1805, and consisted of 4 ministers. No congregations are named. In 1807 they reported 9 congregations, and in 1809, 12, as follows: Geneseo, Ulysses, Milton, Romulus, Onondaga, Caledonia, Junius, Geneva, Gorham, Seneca, and two Congregational churches; total, 12. In 1814, they reported 31 churches, 5 of which, we believe, were Congregational, and probably more. According to a statement re-

ently published by that Presbytery, they have at present but one Congregational church.*

The Presbyteries of Cayuga and Onondaga were constituted in 1810; the history of which is as follows. In 1808 the Synod of Albany, by permission of the General Assembly, received the Middle Association of the Western District as a constituent part of that Synod. In 1809 they reported to the Synod 21 congregations. In the minutes of the General Assembly for that year and the next, they are embraced in the statistical account; but the number and names of their congregations are not given; except that in 1810 seven of them are mentioned as having taken up collections, viz. Aurelius, Cazenovia, Sempronius, Otisco, Fabius, 1st church in Genoa, and Homer. In the fall of that year, the Presbytery of Geneva and the Middle Association made a joint request to Synod to be organized into three Presbyteries, which was accordingly done. Previous to this the Presbytery of Geneva embraced all the territory west of the Presbytery of Oneida. By this arrangement that part of the Geneva Presbytery which lay east of Cayuga Lake was detached from it, and in connexion with the churches belonging to the Association, two Presbyteries were formed, viz. Cayuga and Onondaga. But though the eastern section of the territory previously belonging to the Presbytery of Geneva was divided between the two new Presbyteries, it will be seen by a recurrence to the report of 1809, as given above, that it contained but one congregation, viz. Onondaga. Of course those two Presbyteries, with this single exception, were composed of the churches

* I saw a member of the Presbytery soon after this statement was published, who told me it must be a mistake, for he knew of 3 that are Congregational. He was not present at the meeting, when the resolution containing this statement was passed. Of course either one or the other must be in an error; and though the presbytery, one would think, are the best authority, I can easily see that, in calling the roll and asking the several members present what they knew of this or that church, a mistake might have been committed, without blame to any one, unless it be the blame of ignorance. We will put it down, however, according to the statement of the Presbytery.

belonging to the Middle Association; and though they had changed their name from an Association to that of Presbyteries, they were still Congregational churches. Their first report, in 1811, shews that the Presbytery of Cayuga had 15 congregations, and the Presbytery of Onondaga 13. Within 8 years from this time they had, taken together, more than doubled. The former reported, in 1819, 28 congregations, and the latter 29. This increase was owing in part to the dissolution of the Onondaga Association, the ministers and churches belonging to which, connected themselves with those two Presbyteries. As they consisted of Congregational materials in their commencement, so likewise in their progress. Concerning their present organization I am not able to speak with any degree of precision. After the chairman of the committee on statistics in the Auburn convention had presented their report, I asked him how many Congregational churches there are in those two Presbyteries, but he could not tell; which shows how very general must have been the inquiries of the committee, or else that they were very unsuccessful in obtaining information. A minister who has been preaching for about one year in the Cayuga Presbytery informed me that he knew of two, but how many there are in the Presbytery he was unable to say. I shall be obliged therefore to leave these two Presbyteries without even a conjecture how they are organized; unless it be a fair inference that since they were Congregationalists in 1810 and 1819,—and since they came in under a pledge, as Mr. Hotchkin said in the Convention, that their rights as Congregationalists should never be invaded; therefore they are Congregationalists now. Doubtless a considerable number of them are; but whether a majority or a minority, I cannot affirm.

The Presbytery of Bath was formed from the Presbytery of Geneva, in 1817. Two years afterwards, (which was the first time they reported to the General Assembly) they had 11 churches, 3 of which, if not more, were Congregational. The church in Bath was Congregational when it was organized and had committee men, according to the plan

of union of 1801 ; but in 1811 they fully adopted the Presbyterian form of government, and appointed ruling elders. There are now at least 2, and we believe 3 Congregational churches in the Presbytery, one of which is the largest church in their bounds.

The Presbytery of Cortland was organized from the Presbytery of Onondaga, in 1825. According to their 1st report, in 1827 they had 14 churches, 7 of which we have good evidence to believe, were Congregational ; and a large portion of the remaining 7 were probably of this character. See the Minutes of the Assembly for 1814, 1818 and 1825, from which it will appear that nearly all of these churches either had their origin in the Middle Association, or bear other marks of being Congregational. A member of the Presbytery whom I saw at Auburn informed me that they now have 4 or 5 of this description, and possibly more ; he could not speak with certainty.*

The Presbytery of Chenango was organized from Otsego in 1826. Its history is as follows. The ministers belonging to the Union Association not being able to obtain a vote for dissolving the body because the churches were opposed to the measure, "ran away from it," as my informant expressed himself, and joined the Otsego Presbytery. Immediately afterwards the Presbytery made application to the General Assembly for the formation of a new Presbytery to be called Chenango, which request was granted, and a Presbytery was formed, consisting of ministers only. Their first meeting at Oxford gave the first intimation which the churches received that a Presbytery had been constituted. From another source I have received substantially the same account, differing only in regard to the time at which the Union Association was broken up. He says, the Presbytery "consisted of 5 ministers and *no churches at all*."

* I have been told that a member of that Presbytery stated not long since that there was but one church in that Presbytery which had a regular session according to the Constitution of the Presbyterian church ; but how much credit should be given to it, I cannot say.

In September of that year, [it was organized in June.] an accommodation plan grounded on that negotiated with the General Assembly of 1808, was adopted ; allowing churches to govern themselves upon purely Congregational principles with a few trifling exceptions, and 2 churches joined. Some time after that, the Union Association was broken up, and the churches mostly came into Presbytery." From the same individual I learn that "there are now nominally 14 Congregational churches, the real existence of two of them doubtful," and "5 nominally Presbyterian churches, the existence of two very doubtful, one of them not on the statistical report of Presbytery to General Assembly." Their last report to the General Assembly gives them only 17 churches ; the above statement gives 19. One of them, it is said, was not on the report, and the other may have been omitted by mistake of the clerk.

The Presbytery of Tioga was constituted from the Presbytery of Cayuga, in 1829. In the following year they reported 14 churches, 5 of which, as will appear by a reference to former minutes of the General Assembly, were Congregational ; and it is to be inferred from the character of the Presbytery from which it was organized that the remainder were mostly of this description. I received an impression at the Auburn convention that they are now very similar to the Presbyteries of Otsego and Delaware, i. e. nearly equally divided ; but as I was not perfectly certain, I addressed a letter of inquiry to a member of the Presbytery, from whom I have received no answer. I shall therefore put them down according to my impression at that time.

The Presbytery of Delaware was formed from Chenango, in 1831 ; and consisted, according to their first report of 14 churches, nearly all of which, (coming from *Chenango* Presbytery,) were undoubtedly Congregational. It was stated at the Auburn Convention that there are now about as many Presbyterian as Congregational. One of the latter class, at least, has a standing committee, and of course was organized on the plan of 1801.

The Presbytery of Chemung was constituted from the Presbytery of Bath, in 1836; and consists of 22 churches, one of which, if not more, was originally Congregational; but they are all at this time (according to a declaration made at the Convention) Presbyterian.

We may present therefore, the following tabular view :

Geneva,	39 churches,	38 Presbyterian, and	1 Congregational.
Cayuga,	31 churches, how	organized we know not.	
Onondaga,	24 churches,	do.	do.
Bath,	19 churches,	17 Presbyterian, and	2 Congregational.
Cortland,	15 churches,	8 Pres. (probably) and	7 Congregational.
Chenango,	19 churches,	5 Presbyterian, and	14 Congregational.
Tioga,	18 churches,	9 Presbyterian, and	9 Congregational.
Delaware,	19 churches.	10 Presbyterian, and	9 Congregational.
Chemung,	22 churches,	22 Presbyterian.	

Total as far as known, 109 Presbyterian, and 42 Congregational.*

In some of the Presbyteries the preferences of the people are decidedly in favor of Congregationalism. Concerning one of them I have received the following testimony: "I think the plan (meaning the plan of union) has not worked well on the whole; though perhaps some good has resulted. The churches have never been very cordial towards Presbytery." "A majority in *most* of the churches would prefer belonging to a Congregational Association; a minority in many of them would not, and perhaps a majority in some would not." In regard to the territory embraced by two or three others, another has remarked that he believes those churches formed on the accommodation plan would prefer to become Congregationalists altogether, but they are prevented by the influence of their ministers. To show the jealousy which they feel towards Presbyterianism, he said the pastor of one of the churches proposed, as the first article of a confession of faith for that church, "that they adopt the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian church

* We think it highly probable that a full report from all the Presbyteries would make the proportion of Congregational churches larger than is here presented; but as we have resolved not to exaggerate, we have put the number of Congregational churches smaller in two or three instances than the truth would probably require.

as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Sacred Scriptures," but it was rejected; not because the church did not approve of our Confession of Faith, but because they regarded it as the first step towards endeavouring to make them Presbyterians. Concerning one or two more of the Presbyteries, it was distinctly intimated at the Auburn Convention that many of the churches prefer Congregationalism; and unless they can enjoy it in the Presbyterian church, they will form some other connection. Three or four of the Presbyteries are probably satisfied as a body with the Presbyterian form of government, and perhaps prefer it to any other; but in nearly all of them there are individual churches who would be better pleased if they were connected with a Congregational Association.

Some portions of the Synod are in a good degree exempt from those errors and irregularities which have prevailed in that section of the state. But in regard to other portions the same testimony could not be given. A letter which was first published in the Hartford Christian Watchman soon after the meeting of the last Assembly, and which is understood to have been written by a member of the Cortland Presbytery, contains the following: "I declared more than once before the Assembly, that the errors against which the Convention testified do exist, and that I was ready to vote for their condemnation. In my views of the existence of these errors, and of the duty of condemning them, I presume at least one half of the delegation from the interior of New York coincide." Another member of that Presbytery addressed a letter about fifteen months ago to a member of the Presbytery of Albany which contained a remark to the following effect: (I have not the letter in my possession though I have seen it) "When I was a member of the Albany Presbytery, I was regarded as a *new measure* man—but here I am considered to be such an *old measure* man, that I cannot satisfy the people, and shall be obliged to leave my congregation." Concerning the Presbytery of Delaware, a minister who has resided in their bounds observed in general terms, "the ministers and

churches are generally *new measure*." Of the Presbytery of Chenango another minister writes, "A considerable number of members and two *ministers* incline strongly to Taylorism—I should say are Taylorites—*more* are not sound Calvinists of the Edwards stamp. Our theology has many shades—our irregularities are such as naturally spring from a kind of fever and ague fits in churches, with the ague by far the longest." The preceding remark concerning Taylorism will also apply to one or two ministers in the Presbytery of Geneva (I speak by authority of one of their members,) and to the same number in the Presbytery of Cayuga.

In a few churches in several of the Presbyteries, perfectionism has prevailed to a greater or less extent; but except in two or three cases, it has received no countenance from the ministers. In 1833, a very laudable zeal was manifested in endeavouring to prevent the errors and extravagances of Mr. Myrick, (one of the leaders of the perfectionists,) who held protracted meetings for a short time in some of their churches. The Presbyteries of Cayuga and Onondaga each issued a circular warning the churches to beware of Mr. Myrick, and they also entered a complaint against him to the Oneida Presbytery, of which he was then a member. The following extract of a letter written at the time by a member of the Onondaga Presbytery, will show what were Mr. Myrick's sentiments and measures, and also the feelings of the Presbytery towards him: "I will now mention some things" [concerning Mr. M.,] "a part of which I have heard myself, and a part heard by a gentleman of veracity to whom I will refer you." . . . "1st. Entering other congregations, and holding protracted meetings without the consent of either pastor or church." . . . "2d. Irreverent praying, such as 'God smite the devil,' 'God smite the whited sepulchres,' 'Jesus Christ come down here and attend to these hard cases,' accompanied by loud respondings, groaning, jumping, leaping, stamping, smiting fists and hands, pounding on the floor, &c. 3d. Profane language, such as 'you are as black as hell,' 'wicked as hell,' 'proud as hell,'

‘damned devils,’ ‘the devil is in you,’ ‘hell hardened,’ ‘God provoking wretches.’ 4th. Abusive treatment of professed Christians and ministers who did not unite with him in his movements and measures. He called them ‘the children of the devil,’ ‘drone bees in God’s hive,’ ‘too cursed lazy to work,’ ‘fattening on the blood of damned souls,’ ‘God would give them blood to drink,’ &c. 5th. Erroneous doctrines. He says the Holy Ghost never operates on impenitent sinners, that the sinner does not need the Spirit in order to repent; that all such professors of religion as have any remaining sin are not born of God, but are going to hell; that real Christians do fall into their former impenitent state and go to hell; that God would not accept of any service, nor hear the prayer of any person who had the least remaining sin; and that a person may be converted and submit to God, and yet not be a Christian, for he may not have received Christ, and may not have been baptized of the Holy Ghost.”

“6th. He denounces in strong terms all creeds, confessions of faith, the commentaries on the Bible and systems of divinity.” “What you state in relation to the ministers in this county, being unwilling to admit him into their pulpits, I believe to be true. It is my opinion, sir, that there is not a church and minister in the county that would be ready to receive him as a preacher. The time has been when some *did*, but it has, I believe, been to their sorrow. I do not know of any minister in this Presbytery that would sustain him in this course, unless it be perhaps A. and P.”

Mr. Myrick is now a Congregationalist, and is located in the bounds of that Presbytery. He is the editor of a paper, and by this means as well as by his preaching, is promulgating his pernicious doctrines—and I regret to add, they are embraced by a *few* in quite a number of churches, to the great grief and vexation of their brethren and pastors.

The question whether the state of things is better now than it was five years ago, has received different answers. One brother writes, “A comparison of the present state of things with that of five years ago, so far as I know, would lead me to conclude, that there is little difference, except a

little more caution and far less action of any kind." Another has expressed a different opinion. Probably in some Presbyteries there is not much change, while in others there may be. One circumstance (given by the latter as proof of the correctness of his opinion) is very favorable. A few years ago the Rev. Dr. Richards was considered to be so far behind the spirit of the age, that some young men of 21 had more influence with the churches than he. But now it is otherwise. There is a return, among the people, to a greater degree of Christian decorum—old age is more honoured—ministerial character and standing are more respected—and more deference is paid to the counsels of wisdom and experience.

Synod of Genesee.

This Synod was constituted, in 1821, by a division of the Synod of Geneva, and consisted of four Presbyteries, viz. Niagara, Genesee, Rochester and Ontario, to which two others have since been added—Buffalo and Angelica. The Presbytery of Niagara was organized, in 1817, by a division of the Presbytery of Geneva, consisting of three ministers, and (so far as I can ascertain from the reports of the Geneva Presbytery previous to this time) of not more than two or three churches. But during that year a number of new ones were organized; and, in 1818, according to a statement made by the Rev. Mr. Stillman, there were at least six Congregational churches belonging to the Presbytery; which doubtless embraced two-thirds or three-fourths of the whole number. The next year the number was greatly increased. They reported, in 1819, thirty-two Congregations; twenty-six of which were vacant. Most of them had been just formed, and, as we have good evidence for believing, were organized on the plan of union. But a large part of these were set off in a few years to form a new Presbytery, which reduced their number to thirteen. Their present number is sixteen, all but four of which, (according to an account given me by one of their members,) are Pres-

byterian, though he could not speak with certainty in regard to some of them.

The Presbytery of Ontario was also formed from the Presbytery of Geneva, and, at the same time, with that of Niagara, viz. in 1817. The number of churches belonging to it when it was organized, we have no means of ascertaining. In 1819, there were twenty-three, five of which at least, and probably eight or ten, were Congregational. At present I learn that the number of Congregational churches is five or six.

The Presbytery of Genesee was constituted from the Presbytery of Ontario, in 1819, consisting of one Presbyterian church and four or five Congregational. In 1825, they reported twenty-two churches, seven of which, so far as we are able to ascertain, were Congregational. Concerning the remainder we are not informed. At the present time the number of Congregational churches does not exceed five or six. At the time or soon after the Presbytery was formed, an exposition of the plan of union was drawn up, and transcribed into their Presbyterial Records, for the information of the churches under their care. In that exposition no allusion is made, my informant thinks, to any other plan than that of 1801; in accordance with which it was supposed by the Presbytery that the churches might either appoint a standing committee, or if they preferred it, might transact their business through the male members of the church taken as a body; acting in the latter case as a kind of committee of the whole, in the place of having a session or a standing committee—doing their business in their own way, but subject to the revision of the Presbytery. This latter plan has generally been adopted; but no such thing has ever been known in that Presbytery as referring matters to Congregational councils.

The Presbytery of Rochester was likewise formed from the Presbytery of Ontario, and, in the same year, with that of Genesee, viz. in 1819. It consisted, as far as we can ascertain, of seven or eight churches, several of which are known to have been Congregational—and probably most

of them were. One well acquainted with their history has informed me that a majority of those which are now Presbyterian, were originally Congregational. They are now all Presbyterian except five.

The Presbytery of Buffalo was constituted from the Presbytery of Niagara in 1822 or 23; and was composed principally of Congregational churches. In 1831, they reported thirty-four churches, at which time a minister who was then a member, has informed me, there were not more than six or eight Presbyterian churches in the Presbytery. The same minister, at my request, designated the churches (so far as he knew) that are now Congregational, and also those that are Presbyterian. He named twelve of the former and eight of the latter. Of the remaining twenty-three he was ignorant. If the proportion of these should prove to be the same as that of the others, there are seventeen Presbyterian and twenty-six Congregational.

The Presbytery of Angelica was constituted in 1828, from the Presbytery of Bath—and had, in 1829, twelve churches. It then belonged to the Synod of Geneva; but by an act of the General Assembly, in 1834, it was transferred to the Synod of Genesee. According to their last report to the General Assembly, they have twenty churches—but a member of the Presbytery has informed me that two of them do not now belong to the Presbytery. According to his statement, there are twelve Presbyterian and six Congregational.

The following is a summary of the whole :

Niagara,	16 churches,	12 Presbyterian, and	4 Congregational.
Genesee,	26 churches,	20 Presbyterian, and	6 Congregational.
Rochester,	29 churches,	24 Presbyterian, and	5 Congregational.
Ontario,	21 churches,	18 Presbyterian, and	6 Congregational.
Buffalo,	43 churches,	17 Presbyterian, and	26 Congregational.
Angelica,	18 churches,	12 Presbyterian, and	6 Congregational.
Total,	156 churches,	103 Presbyterian, and	53 Congregational.

This large majority of churches thus presented, which are Presbyterially organized, I am obliged to say, is rather nominal than real. There are not by any means (as would

appear from this exhibition) one hundred and three Presbyterian churches organized from a settled preference among the members generally, for this mode of government, and conducting their affairs harmoniously according to Presbyterian order. One of the most important churches in the Niagara Presbytery, I have been told, have difficulties at this time, growing out of their church organization. In one of the churches in Rochester Presbytery, so large a number of the members have recently seceded, or are expected to do it, in order to form a Congregational church, that fears are entertained that they will be nearly broken up. Concerning the Genesee Presbytery I learned still more. One church that was originally Presbyterian has, on account of dissatisfaction, become Congregational. A second have changed from one to the other two or three times, and have now fixed upon the plan of appointing elders in rotation, a part of the eldership going out every year. A third pursue the same course with the last named and for the same reasons. A fourth are expected soon to change their order from Presbyterian to Congregational. A majority of the churches in that Presbytery, it is believed, prefer the Congregational mode of government—but they retain the Presbyterian form, because, having once adopted it, they consent to yield their preferences for the sake of their minister and the few in the church who are better pleased with it.

The churches formed on the plan of union are not all of them well satisfied with their connection. At a late meeting of the Ontario Presbytery, one of them “declared off—and in their declaration they stated they had reaped no essential benefit, but rather the contrary, from the union.” Several churches which appear from the Minutes of the Assembly to have been connected a few years ago with the Genesee Presbytery, are now (I am told) independent. Dissatisfaction has frequently been felt by churches formed on the plan of union, because the Presbytery had taken exceptions to their proceedings, and in some cases reversed

their decisions. They knew how to manage their own affairs, they thought, independently of Presbytery, and did not feel willing to be under their supervision and control. In some instances, this has operated to make them stop sending delegates to Presbytery and stand entirely aloof while they retained a nominal connection—and in others it has resulted in their declaring themselves independent, or joining an Association.

There have been material departures, I have reason to fear, among many in the Synod from the old orthodox doctrines—and this has been accompanied, in some instances, by measures of a very doubtful character, and in others by such as were wild and extravagant. A member of the Buffalo Presbytery writes thus: “Ministers and churches in this section have become so much disposed to favour Arminian doctrines, and are so fond of new things, that it is difficult to preach the doctrines of our Confession, or even to use our endeavours to correct abuses and extravagances in measures, without hearing the cry of Old School, opposed to revivals,” &c. That Presbytery adopted some time ago a set of articles of Faith for the use of their churches, from which almost every thing distinguishing is excluded. Among other points is that of infant baptism—and hence, in practice, it is left optional with parents to have their children baptized or not, just as they please. This last article has been erased from the Confessions of several of the churches in Genesee Presbytery—not, however, by the sanction of the Presbytery, but through the influence of one of their members.

An intelligent and pious man has told me concerning a minister in Niagara Presbytery under whose preaching he sat for several months, that he had heard him say he did not believe in the imputation of Adam’s sin; and on one occasion he almost ridiculed the idea of the *special* influences of the Holy Spirit. At a protracted meeting last May, in one of the churches in that Presbytery, the officiating minister, after preaching a sermon on the ability of christians to keep the law of God, called upon them to

confess their sins and promise to keep the law. Most of them were willing to confess, but when they came to make promises, there was a reluctance; as but few were prepared to fall in practically with the doctrine of the sermon. Some said we will *try*—others that we will *endeavour by God's assistance*, &c.; but this did not satisfy him—he called it antinomianism, and told them he wished them to promise not that they would *try* to keep the law, but that they would *keep* it.

One of the ministers in Genesee Presbytery and a part of his church are perfectionists. He believes it to be essential to a man's being a christian that he be perfect. When a christian sins, he "*un-christians*" himself—and consequently a christian remaining such cannot commit sin. He also believes in miracles and prophecy, and has a propheticess in his house for whom he professes to entertain high veneration. It is due to the Presbytery to say that he is now under process. A spice of perfectionism is found in several of the churches; which, though small, (consisting generally of not more than two or three members,) is enough to embitter the comfort of their christian brethren.

In relation to irregularities, a member of the Rochester Presbytery affirmed publicly at their meeting some time last summer, that there was but one thing mentioned of this kind on the floor of the last Assembly, but what can be proved to have occurred within a short period of time in the bounds of the Genesee Synod. Another member of the same Presbytery in private conversation corroborated his statement—and went still farther, by saying that *worse* things had occurred there than any which were alluded to on the floor of the Assembly. As the result of this state of things, ministerial confidence is very much diminished, and brethren have less freedom than formerly in calling on each other, entering into conversation, or exchanging pulpits. They suspect that they do not agree, and hence keep at a distance.

Whether all the Presbyteries in the Synod are equally affected with the leaven of false doctrines and "new measures," I am not entirely competent to judge; as my inter-

course was confined principally to two or three of them. But I have reason to think that in some there is more orthodoxy and less extravagance than in others—and perhaps in all of them, the state of things on the whole is becoming better. A member of Ontario Presbytery writes, as follows: “New Theology and new measures have received a number of checks in our Presbytery, and indeed in this region generally—especially since the old school in the Assembly began to be so earnest for reform. Though I do not by any means suppose but what the *roots* of the evil remain among us yet, ready to spring up when permitted. Indeed in one sense, almost the entire theology of this whole region is “*New*,” if strictly compared with our Standards—yet not in the sense (as I suppose) of your inquiry. The majority of our Presbytery, I think, are *sound* according to the New England system.” In *some* of the Presbyteries, the people (it is thought) are sounder than the ministers, of which I had in two or three cases ample proof. Perhaps this may be regarded as a favourable circumstance. Though ministers are “set for the defence of the gospel,” the people form the “sacramental host,” and will often stand firm and steadfast, even though “the standard bearer fainteth.” They are the pillars of the church, which will remain unshaken, though the priest at the altar should be “spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit.” An elder, in one of the churches, who was lately charged by the congregation with the duty of procuring a pastor, on being told that such a man (a member of the Synod and also of the Auburn Convention) could be obtained, said he should not dare propose him to the people, because he was so much of a new school and new measure man, he would not answer. We believe there is quite a number of such churches, and we indulge the hope that, in connection with those ministers who are sound in the faith, they will exert a redeeming influence, which will ere long restore that whole region to spiritual health and prosperity.

Synod of the Western Reserve.

Though I did not travel in the bounds of that Synod, I have obtained, from sources entitled to credit, some information which I will communicate. The history of the formation of that Synod, according to a letter from one of its members, the Rev. J. Seward, as published in the Ohio Observer, is as follows: "The Presbytery of Grand River, agreeably to the order of the Synod of Pittsburgh, was organized in the autumn of 1814, and as it covered a ground on which a union had been established between Presbyterians and Congregationalists, according to regulations adopted by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, it was deemed necessary that this Presbytery should be so organized as to consolidate and perpetuate this union, and thus carry out the recommendations and injunctions of the General Assembly. To accomplish this object, a number of articles, adapted to the peculiar situation of the churches in this region, was adopted by this Presbytery, and afterwards by the Presbyteries of Portage and Huron, as they were respectively organized. The design of these articles was to secure to all connected with these Presbyteries, the rights and privileges pledged in the regulations adopted by the General Assembly and the General Association in 1801. As the Congregationalists had from their childhood been instructed in the Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism, and as this was the basis of the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, they had no material difficulty in coming together on the distinguishing doctrines of the christian religion as embraced in the Calvinistic system. Nor had they any objection to the discipline of the Presbyterian church, so far as it was applicable to them in their peculiar situation. Hence, in their preamble to their constitution, they express their approbation of the Confession of Faith and Discipline of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America; and in the articles of the constitution there is nothing which does not perfectly harmonize with the standards of the Presbyterian church, excepting those

particulars which are designed to carry out the principles of the plan of union, to which allusion has so often been made. The distinguishing particular of this description was, that individual ministers and churches may adopt either the Congregational or Presbyterian mode of government and discipline, and that this article shall never be affected by any additions or alterations which these regulations may receive. Here is the grand charter of the contract to perpetuate the plan of union. The ministers and churches forming these new Presbyteries supposed that they were bound to make this covenant with each other, by the express direction of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church. They made it. They inserted it prominently in their books of records. The records of the Presbytery of Grand River, containing this contract, were presented to the Synod of Pittsburgh, at their meeting in 1815, for examination. The peculiar circumstances of the Presbytery being understood, a committee of the most wise and judicious members were appointed to examine the records. The committee reported and the records were approved. Thus did the Synod of Pittsburgh ratify and confirm, in 1815, the covenant proposed and adopted by the General Assembly in 1801, and which had been in successful operation in the new settlements for the period of 14 years. In 1819 the records of the Presbytery of Portage, and in 1824 the records of the Presbytery of Huron, each containing the same contract, went through with a similar process and were approved by the Synod of Pittsburgh. The time at which these records were approved was at the first meeting of the Synod after the formation of the respective Presbyteries of Grand River, Portage and Huron. At a meeting of the General Assembly in 1825, a petition was presented for a division of the Synod of Pittsburgh, and the erection of a new Synod, to be composed of the three Presbyteries above named, and to be known by the name of the Synod of the Western Reserve. This request was granted, and in compliance with the order of the General Assembly, the Synod of the Western Reserve was organized at Hudson, Sept. 27, 1825."

From the above it will be perceived, that the three Presbyteries of which this Synod was composed, were formed explicitly on the plan of union. Had it not been for that plan, neither they nor the Synod could have been organized.

In addition to the facts here stated, we have obtained from several individuals, who either reside or have resided on the Reserve, the following :

1. When the Synod was constituted, there was not probably a single Presbyterian church in the three Presbyteries of which it was composed.

2. There are at present in the Synod, according to a statement made at the Auburn Convention, 31 Presbyterian churches—and in summing up the details which I have obtained from other sources, that statement is nearly correct. A person who has been a member of the Presbytery of Grand River, expressed to me a doubt whether there was at this time a single Presbyterian church in the Presbytery. It was stated on the floor of the last Assembly, by members of that Synod, that there was but one Presbyterian church in Trumbull Presbytery, one in Lorain, and one, I think, in Medina. But as the stated clerk of the Synod affirmed at the Auburn Convention, that there was no Presbytery in the Synod but what had at least two Presbyterian churches, we shall give to those Presbyteries two each ; and then the result, as nearly as I am able to ascertain, will be as follows :

Grand River,	35 churches,	2 Pres'byterian and	33 Congregational.
Portage,	24 churches,	3 Presbyterian and	21 Congregational.
Huron,	25 churches,	15 Presbyterian and	10 Congregational.
Maumce,	8 churches,	2 Presbyterian and	6 Congregational.
Trumbull,	18 shurches,	2 Presbyterian and	16 Congregational.
Lorain,	12 churches,	2 Presbyterian and	10 Congregational.
Cleveland,	10 churches,	4 Presbyterian and	6 Congregational.
Medina,	13 churches,	2 Presbyterian and	11 Congregational.
Total,	<u>145 churches,</u>	<u>32 Presbyterian and</u>	<u>113 Congregational.</u>

As there are no reports for 1837 from the Presbyteries of Trumbull and Lorain, they may have lost some of their churches or received some during the last year, which would alter the aggregate number of churches ; but we presume the above does not vary very materially from the truth.

3. The prevailing feelings among the people are decidedly in favor of Congregationalism. A few years ago a commissioner from the Reserve to the General Assembly stated, on the floor of the Assembly, that the churches there, if kindly treated, would soon become fully Presbyterian. When the report of his speech reached those churches they were much displeased, and many letters were written to him from various quarters, complaining that he had misrepresented them. If they had their choice, uninfluenced by their ministers, a large majority of them, it is believed, would join a Congregational Association. But their ministers, knowing their great partiality for Congregationalism, dispense with as much of the forms of the Presbyterian government as possible, and by this means prevent them from going off—telling them, at the same time, that if they will hold on a little longer, the time may come when an Association can be formed.

After the meeting of the General Assembly in 1835, a plan was drawn up, by several ministers, to change the order of the church, and a convention was called for that purpose; but through the influence of Dr. Beecher and others it was deferred. In the fall of 1836 another convention was called for the same purpose, and an Association was formed—but not without considerable opposition from a number of ministers who were present. One of them opposed it for the following reason, viz. that if they would put it off one year more, the new school would have the majority in the General Assembly; in which case the old school would probably secede, and then they would have the ground.* But their remonstrances did not avail. Several laymen stated in reply, that when their churches were organized on the accommodation plan, it was understood to be temporary—that after the country became more populous they were to have their Associations, as they had been accustomed to in New-England.

* This minister was a member of the Anburn Convention, and advocated sending up commissioners to the General Assembly "to fight every inch of ground."

When the news of the proceedings of the last Assembly reached the Reserve, some of the ministers thought they ought to attempt nothing more, but organize a Congregational Association. The Ohio Observer came out to this effect ; but letters from New-York and Philadelphia changed their minds. The churches, it is believed, would generally be in favor of such a measure.

4. A few years ago, Congregational ministers were frequently received into their Presbyteries, at least into some of them, without answering the constitutional questions ; but of late, since the practice was censured by the General Assembly, the constitutional questions have generally, and perhaps always, been propounded.

5. A few years ago, after the Assembly had passed a resolution refusing to receive committee men as commissioners, the Presbytery of Grand River, in order to have a lay representation whose seat would not be disputed, appointed a man who had been a ruling elder in the state of N. York, (my informant thinks at Troy,) though he was then, at the time of his appointment, a member of a Congregational church.

6. A majority of the ministers, and of the members in most of the churches, accord in doctrines and measures with Mr. Finney. This is inferred, concerning the ministers, from the fact, that about two years ago a paper was signed, by fifty ministers or more, inviting Mr. Finney to become Professor of Theology in the Western Reserve College ; and concerning ministers and people both it may be inferred from the fact, that Mr. Lucius Foote has attended protracted meetings pretty extensively on the Reserve, and was generally approved by the ministers and churches, though there were some exceptions. Mr. Foote, it is said, agrees substantially with Mr. Finney, but goes farther than the latter in some points, from what is called old school theology.

7. A gentleman who lived a number of years on the Reserve has informed me, that he frequently heard it spoken of among the ministers, that they are reforming the Presbyterian church, working out the old leaven, &c. and that in a few years more they will succeed.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS.

As the object which we have in view in making the preceding statements is to enable the churches to judge how far the acts of the last General Assembly can be justified, we shall now make some remarks on this point.

1. It is notorious that errors and irregularities of an alarming character have prevailed in those Synods for 8 or 10 years past. This is strongly confirmed by the facts which we have stated above, and by the admissions of various individuals residing in their bounds.

2. These errors and irregularities have obtained such an influence, and are extended over so large a territory, that taken in connection with the sympathy which is felt for them in some other sections of the church, it is exceedingly difficult to rectify them by ordinary process. This position we believe will be denied by few who have noticed the progress of events as they have occurred in our church for a few years past.

3. The abrogation of the plan of union opened a door, it was thought, for reaching the evils, both easy and effective; and hence the Assembly resorted to this course. The propriety of this measure, and its application to these Synods, are the points at issue between the two parties.

Concerning the measure itself, viz. the abrogation of the plan of union, we wish to correct two or three mistakes which appear to be current in regard to it.

1. It has been often asserted, and is extensively believed, that the General Assembly *proposed* the plan. From Dr. McAuley's speech on this subject, in the last Assembly, it would seem our Connecticut brethren themselves are under this impression. But whoever entertains such a belief is labouring under a mistake. It has doubtless arisen from the fact that the only authority which has been relied upon for the history of the affair, is the Assembly's Digest, which

unfortunately contains only a part of the record. A recurrence to the Minutes of the Assembly for 1800 and 1801, will show that the plan was proposed by the General Association of Connecticut, and not by the General Assembly.

In the Minutes for 1800 is the following: "The Rev. Dr. Jonathan Edwards, the Rev. Asa Hylliar and Jonathan Freeman were appointed delegates from this Assembly to the General Association of Connecticut," &c. Not a word is said about instructing them to negotiate a plan of union. In the Minutes of 1801 we find their report as follows: "The delegates from the General Assembly to the General Association of Connecticut report, that they have attended according to appointment through the whole course of the sessions of the General Association. That besides the business peculiar to the churches of Connecticut, the *General Association appointed a committee to confer with a committee that may be appointed by the General Assembly, on measures which may promote union among the inhabitants of the new settlements and the missionaries to those settlements, as appears by the inclosed paper.*"

Immediately after the committee had reported, the paper referred to above was read; the minute concerning which is as follows: "A communication was read from the General Association of the state of Connecticut, appointing a committee to confer with a committee of the Presbyterian church, to consider the measures proper to be adopted by the General Association and the General Assembly for establishing a uniform system of church government between the inhabitants of the new settlements who are attached to the Presbyterian form of government, and those who prefer the Congregational form. Ordered that the said communication lie on the table. Succeeding this, on the same page, is the following: "The Rev. Dr. Edwards, McKnight and Woodhull, the Rev. Mr. Blatchford and Mr. Hutton were appointed a committee to consider and digest a plan of government for the churches in the new settlements, *agreeably to the proposal of the General Association of Connecticut*, and report the same as soon as convenient." Then follows

the report of this committee, as contained in the Digest, page 297.

2. It has been often affirmed, that during the whole period of 36 years in which this plan has been in operation, *no objection* has been made to it; and that consequently it is to be considered as having received during this long period the silent approbation of the whole church. But this is a mistake. First, it is not true, in the sense intended by those who revert to it, that the plan has been in operation for so long a time. I mean in such a sense as to give to the fact that force which it is supposed to have in determining its validity. For 10 or 12 years after it was formed, its influence upon the church was scarcely felt; and for as many more, the evils growing out of it had not developed themselves as they have since that time. The plan was originally intended not as the medium through which Congregationalism would be perpetuated in the Presbyterian church; but to give opportunity for Congregationalists (if after learning the character of our system they approved of it) to become Presbyterian. This remark applies to both parties in the arrangement. The ministers of Connecticut were favourable to the Presbyterian form of government; one feature of it was already in existence in their churches, and they felt willing (not to say desirous) to have their people who should emigrate to other states become Presbyterian. This idea, we think, is clearly implied in the account which Dr. McAuley gives of the interview of the committee of the Assembly with a committee of the Association, in 1826. "As to the union, they had said that it had not been gone into for their accommodation, but for ours; that they had agreed to it for two reasons: first, because it was a help to many New-England people in the infant settlements towards obtaining gospel ordinances; and secondly, *because it assisted the Assembly in spreading Presbyterianism through that region.*" But instead of spreading Presbyterianism, it has, in a large number of cases, spread Congregationalism under the Presbyterian name. Presbyteries have not only been formed of Congregational materials, but with an ex-

press stipulation that they might always remain so, and yet continue in the Presbyterian church. And then, by such a construction of the plan of union as was never intended by the original framers, they claimed the right of sending commissioners, who were not ruling elders to the General Assembly. This is the point of time at which the plan ought to be dated, if it is designed to have any bearing on the constitutional question; because at this time, and not before, were its effects upon our church order fully manifest; and this would be not 36 years ago, but less than 20.

We are now prepared to say, secondly, that as soon as these effects of the plan of union were perceived, objections began to be made to it, and they have been repeated at different times, and in one form or another, ever since. In 1826, a commissioner from the Rochester Presbytery was received by the Assembly, who was not a ruling elder; but a protest was immediately entered against it, signed by forty-two members. The same year, as appears from Dr. M'Auley's speech in the last Assembly, which we have quoted above, the committee from the Assembly to meet a similar committee from the Association of Connecticut, brought up this subject, in connection with that for which they were especially appointed. The particulars he does not give us, but we cannot perceive why it should have come up at all, except because it was a kindred topic to that for the consideration of which they had been appointed, viz. the practice of allowing their delegates to vote in the General Assembly; and because dissatisfaction with the one, necessarily implied dissatisfaction with the other. And it would seem, from the remarks of the committee of the Association, that they did so consider it. Their remarks appear to be a reply to some complaint in regard to its operation which fell from the committee of the Assembly.

In 1831 a committee-man was received by the Assembly as a commissioner from Grand River Presbytery; against which a protest was entered, signed by 67 members. A part of this protest we shall transcribe. "The articles of agreement alluded to in the beginning of this paper," say

they, referring to the plan of union of 1801, "are supposed to give this individual, and all others similarly situated, a seat in this assembly. That agreement is altogether anomalous to our form of government, and, so far as it does extend, is in derogation of it." . . . "Those articles can never cover this case, because they expressly stipulate the church session and Presbytery, as the church courts to which these "committee men" may have access in the character of ruling elders, and mention no others. As the grant was in derogation of the rights of the eldership, and adverse to the nature of our church government, it is manifestly just such a grant as, if valid at all, could only be so within the strict import of its own terms. We do not feel called on to discuss the fact, whether those articles, thus interpreted, are constitutional or not. If, however, they are so construed as to place members here, who are, by our constitution, forbidden to be here, or as in any degree to affect the principles of the organization of this house, as clearly defined in our books, then it is manifest that the articles must be considered utterly *null and void*." The answer of the Assembly to this protest, (drawn up by a member from the Western Reserve,) contains the following: "The conventional agreement, or treaty, above referred to, (meaning the plan of union,) expressly provides that laymen, of the character there contemplated, shall be admitted to the Presbyteries on an equality with elders. If therefore there is, in connection with this subject, an infraction of the Constitution, it is in *the treaty itself, and the only proper remedy for the supposed evil would be found in a regular proceeding to amend or annul the said treaty.*"

But though the Assembly received the commissioner above referred to, they adopted a resolution that "the appointment, by some Presbyteries, as has occurred in a few cases, of members of standing committees to be members of General Assembly, is inexpedient, and of questionable constitutionality, and therefore ought not, in future, to be made:" yet the very next year, that same Presbytery delegated two committee men as commissioners to the Assembly;

but their commissions, after having been placed in the hands of a committee, were withdrawn. At the same meeting there was a commissioner from a Presbytery in Western New-York, who was neither an elder nor a committee man: but being commissioned as an elder, and no body present being acquainted with the circumstance, he was received as a member. The next year a committee man appeared from the Presbytery of Oswego, and would have been received, (as his commission did not specify his true character); but one of the members, who had incidentally become acquainted with the fact, made it known to the house; when leave was given him to withdraw his commission. These facts show with what tenacity those Presbyteries which were formed in pursuance of the plan of union, adhered to the practice of sending up commissioners, even after the Assembly had adopted a resolution against it; and the course which the Assembly pursued, in regard to them, was an expression of disapprobation against their *interpretation* of the plan, if not against the plan itself. In 1835, the Assembly resolved that no more churches should be organized on the plan of union; and in 1837 the plan was abrogated. Thus for 11 years previous to this last act, there was evidently a growing dissatisfaction with the manner in which the plan of union was found to operate; its constitutionality was more than once called in question, and intimations were given, in no doubtful language, that the Assembly ought either to "amend or annul" it.

3. In connection with these facts, let it be remembered that the churches formed on the plan of union had become very numerous—that their feelings and policy were at variance with strict Presbyterianial order—that in many instances, doctrines were held which are inconsistent with our Standards,—and that, claiming a right, from the provisions of the plan, to be represented in the General Assembly, they had well nigh obtained an ascendancy in that body, and were rapidly bringing about a revolution in the church. Under such circumstances, it appears to me, that if an act of this kind could ever be justified, the Assembly ought to be sus-

tained. In the speech of Dr. M'Auley, before referred to, he says, "he readily conceded that the plan was extra-constitutional. The wonder was, that it ever should have been considered as otherwise; but those who entered into the arrangement considered the *necessity of the case as arising above the constitution.*" If the *necessity* of the case was sufficient to justify the *forming* of this union, even though it is acknowledged to have been *extra-constitutional*, the *necessity* of the case will now justify its *abrogation*; especially as the act, so far from being "extra-constitutional," was imperiously demanded on *constitutional* grounds.

4. It is said, by those who are opposed to the measure, that the Assembly were bound, before passing such an act, to ask the consent of the other contracting party; meaning either the General Association of Connecticut or the churches formed on the plan of union. Were they bound to ask the consent of the Association? For an answer to this question, we refer the reader to the opinion of G. Wood, Esq., as published in the New York Observer. "I do not think that this plan of union formed, or was the result of a compact between the General Assembly and the Association of Connecticut, so as to render it obligatory upon the General Assembly to carry into effect the measure, or to continue its operation any longer than they should deem proper." . . . "It may be questioned whether the assent of the Association to the adoption by the Assembly of this plan was necessary. The Congregationalists to be affected by this plan were out of the jurisdiction of that Association, and beyond their control; but they no doubt felt themselves under a moral influence, which rendered it a matter of delicacy and expediency on the part of the General Assembly, to obtain the assent of that Association. But supposing the assent of the Association to have been indispensable; when it was given, they had nothing further to do with the plan. It then became the measure of the General Assembly alone, to be dropped, or acted upon, or modified as they should deem advisable." If this opinion be correct, then the churches alone, if any body, were the party to be consulted. On

this point we have only to observe, that if there is obligation on either side to ask the consent of the other before the connection might be dissolved, this obligation must be equally binding upon both. But have the churches ever felt any obligation of this kind? Have they not always considered it as optional with them whether they continued their connection with the Presbyterian church or not? and have they not always acted on the principle, that whenever they believed it to be more for their advantage to become independent or to join an Association, they were at liberty to take such a step, without asking the consent of the General Assembly? As a matter of courtesy, they have generally notified the Presbytery to which they belonged, that they were about to change their ecclesiastical connection; but not from a belief of the existence of any contract with the Presbytery which obliged them to do so; and it has frequently happened that the Presbyteries have had no knowledge of their intention until after the formation of their new alliances. If, therefore, the churches formed on the plan of union have not understood the plan to involve any obligation upon themselves of the kind supposed, it would be unreasonable in them to maintain that any such obligation rests upon the Assembly, or to expect that any overture should be made to them by the Assembly, asking their consent for a dissolution of the union.

It remains now to inquire whether the Assembly, after having abrogated the plan of union, can be justified in applying the act, in the manner they did, to these four Synods. In relation to this, we remark,

1. That it was anticipated by the opposers of the measure, that the effect of the vote abrogating the plan of union, would be restrospective. For proof of this we refer again to Dr. M'Auley's speech in the last Assembly. He said, "he had no desire to see this accommodation plan perpetuated, or even continued for many years; but he had a strong fellow-feeling with those churches who were affected by its abrogation." . . . "If, indeed, he could be assured

that the churches in question would not be broken up and scattered to the four winds, he would willingly enter on the measure proposed; for he wished at some time to see an end of the plan. He hoped that, at any rate, ample time would be allowed them finally to decide upon their ecclesiastical relations; and if this had formed a part of the plan, he should have made no opposition to it." On what principle were these remarks made? Clearly on this, that unless special provision was made by the Assembly, modifying and restricting the act so as to prevent its taking effect immediately, upon the churches already formed on this plan, he expected that such would be the result.

2. While we are willing to admit there are difficulties in applying the act according to any method which we have heard proposed, including the one adopted by the Assembly, we think the latter on the whole less liable to objection than any other. If these various measures were now before the church for consideration with a view to the future adoption of one of them, we should feel ourselves called upon in the discussion of the subject to notice them severally in their order, and examine their relative propriety; but as this is not the case, we shall simply consider a few things in regard to the measure which has been adopted—reverting to some of the others incidentally as far as they may be involved in the discussion of this.

It will not be denied by any acquainted with our Constitution, that the most legitimate mode for the Assembly to act upon the churches is through the Synods. Suppose, in the case under consideration, they had attempted to act upon the Presbyteries, or (as some believe they ought to have done) directly upon the churches. In the former case it might have been said, they had assumed the prerogatives of the Synod, and in the latter that they had taken into their hands a work which belongs exclusively to the Presbyteries. Those very individuals who now oppose the measures of the Assembly, would have objected with as much earnestness, we have reason to believe, to the other course. They have virtually objected to it already in se-

veral of the Presbyteries by the adoption of resolutions, "assuring the churches under their care, that the plan of union, so far as they are concerned, is still in force, and its stipulations will be preserved by them inviolate."

It is urged against the application of the vote to *Synods*, that those bodies, as such, *could* not have been formed on the plan of union, but were regularly constituted according to the directions of the Book; and therefore they cannot be affected by the abrogation of the plan. As to the *manner* in which Synods are brought into existence, we admit that all of them, except the first, must necessarily be organized alike, viz. by the division of other Synods—and again, that they all must necessarily be alike in being composed of at least three Presbyteries. But suppose one or two of the three Presbyteries of which a particular Synod is composed, though they bear the name of Presbyteries, are in reality Congregational Associations; would the Synod in this case be regularly constituted? Or suppose the Presbyteries generally of which it is composed, though consisting in part of Presbyterian churches, have in them so large a number of Congregationalists, as to give to the Presbyteries a Congregational character; would a Synod composed of such Presbyteries be a regular Synod according to our Constitution? Must it not, on the contrary, be styled, speaking in strict propriety, a *Congregational Synod*, however agreeable to the Constitution may have been the *mere form* of its erection? On the same principle, though churches alone, in the first instance, could be organized on the plan of union, yet as churches in connection with their pastors compose Presbyteries, and Presbyteries compose Synods; if such a number of the churches are formed on this plan, as to control the action and policy of the Presbyteries and Synods, the latter, for aught we can perceive to the contrary, must also be regarded as organized on the plan of union.

Again, it is objected that this mode of applying the act operates *unjustly*; as many of the churches in those Synods are strictly Presbyterian. If this objection be valid,

it would effectually close the door against any action whatever ; except by dissolving the churches formed on the plan of union, and directing them to organize anew—at least, all such churches as are partly composed of Presbyterian members. There would be the same reason to complain of the *injustice* of an act, which disowns a Presbyterian *member* as of one that disowns a *church*. It is true that the mode of remedying an evil by acting upon communities, often if not always subjects individuals among them to temporary inconvenience, who, if they were not thus connected, could not justly be brought into such circumstances. But, if the measure is necessary for the public good, and provision is made by which (if they avail themselves of it) they will not in the end be affected injuriously, they ought not to complain—especially if the evil to be remedied could not be easily reached in any other way.

In order to ascertain whether those acts are *just*, it is important to understand their true nature. Were they acts of *excommunication*, as many affirm ? or did they leave the disowned Synods in this respect, just as they stood before ? If any farther proof be deemed necessary beyond the declaration of the Assembly, this question may be easily answered by a reference to facts. At a meeting of the Synod of Albany which took place a few days ago, among other ministers were present from abroad, there were three from Western New York ; one of them from the Synod of Utica, another from the Synod of Geneva, and a third from the Synod of Genesee—and they were all invited to sit as corresponding members—in which invitation the old school members of the Synod un-animously concurred. Would they have done it if they had regarded those Synods as *excommunicated* ? Certainly not. This fact is of itself a sufficient answer to the charge, and ought to rebuke those who may attempt to excite popular indignation against the Assembly on the ground that those Synods have been “ excinded,” “ cut off,” “ expelled,” without citation or trial. They have the same christian standing as ecclesiastical bodies which they had twelve months ago. All that the Assembly has done is simply to dissolve the connection which has hitherto subsisted between them,

and tell them that hereafter they must act by themselves. Though many individuals in those Synods accord with the views and policy which have long distinguished the Presbyterian church, yet, considered as a whole, they have departed from those opinions and usages ; and they have become so numerous that, instead of being under the control of the Assembly as it was formerly constituted, they have assumed the control themselves, and are rapidly changing the character of the church. Under these circumstances, the Assembly have said to them : we will not disturb your ecclesiastical relations, as they exist among yourselves—but we cannot consent to have the Presbyterian church revolutionized and remodded through your instrumentality ; especially, as you came into it at first only by courtesy and compromise—and we, therefore, regard it as right and proper to inform you that, from this time forward, you shall not be represented in our body. Is not this a fair statement of what the Assembly have done ? If so, (and we believe it cannot be successfully controverted,) we cannot perceive any substantial reason for the charge of injustice—especially as the individuals and churches who (as is alleged) ought to have been excepted, were brought under no censure, and the door was left open for them to form a reunion with the Assembly, if they should think this more for their edification, and for the glory of God than to remain connected with those Synods.

Suppose then the Assembly to have taken a correct course in applying the abrogation of the plan of union to Synods taken as a body ; the only question which remains to be settled is, whether these four Synods have any such connection with the plan of union, as to be affected by its abrogation ? The statistics which we have collected concerning them are intended to have a bearing principally upon two points—first, to show what they were when they were organized—and secondly, what they are now. In regard to the Synod of the Western Reserve, there is no occasion for a single remark. A simple inspection of their history is sufficient to show that they were constituted with reference to the plan, and have continued so to the present time. It

was a Congregational body then, and it is substantially so now.

One of the Presbyteries belonging to the Synod of Utica, viz. the Presbytery of Oneida, did not grow out of this plan—but in a few years after it was organized, it received so large an accession of Congregational churches, as nearly to lose its Presbyterian character—and from that time to this, it has had a sufficient number to exert a strong influence in the Presbytery adverse to strict Presbyterian order. All the other Presbyteries were the legitimate offspring of the plan of union—and they bear a close resemblance to their parent at the present time. Besides their large *numerical* proportion in favour of Congregationalism, there is a strong *predilection* among very many for that mode of government, including *some* of their ministers. To the facts already stated on this subject may be added the following: Several years ago, a clerical brother who had resided ten or twelve months in the bounds of one of the Presbyteries belonging to this Synod, informed me, (and it has been recently confirmed by another brother,) that a number of ministers in that Presbytery* belonged to a Congregational Association, and were acting members both of the Presbytery and Association at the same time—that in one case a candidate who was refused license by the Presbytery, applied immediately afterwards to a part of the same men; who, laying aside their Presbyterian character, and acting in the capacity of Congregational ministers, made out and subscribed his licensure.

The Synod of Geneva not only grew out of the plan of union, but when it was first organized, it had not the materials to form a *Constitutional* Synod. Two of the Presbyteries out of three of which it was composed, were the twin daughters of the Middle Association, and so far as appears from any documents to which I have access, they were substantially Congregational, though they had received the name of Presbyteries. Probably the Association was divided, and those two Presbyteries formed out of it, for

* The Presbytery referred to was Watertown.

the purpose of enabling them to organize a Synod; as the Synod was constituted very soon after. But since that time, accessions have been made, and changes have occurred, to alter considerably its original character. The Presbytery of Geneva can scarcely be said to have been formed in pursuance of the plan of union—and perhaps the same remark may be made concerning the Presbyteries of Bath and Chemung; though the latter have materials in them that were originally Congregational, and one of them is composed in part of such churches at the present time. We may be mistaken in regard to the original character of these two Presbyteries; but so far as we have learned, if these, in connection with the Presbytery of Geneva, had been the constituent parts of the Synod, no great objection could have been made to it. At least, if the Synod had been organized in 1836 (which is the date of the Presbytery of Chemung,) those three Presbyteries were, at that time, sufficiently Presbyterian to constitute a regular Synod. All the other Presbyteries, making two-thirds of the whole number, were formed in close connection with the plan of union; and they are still, to a great extent, Congregational bodies. How far this circumstance ought to be regarded as affecting the constitutionality of the Synod as at present organized, especially when taken in connection with the fact first alluded to, viz. that it owed its existence to the plan of union, and had, at that time, only one regular Presbytery, we leave it for the reader to judge.

Most of the churches belonging to the Synod of Genesee were undoubtedly formed in pursuance of the plan of union, and in their original organization they were generally Congregational. At the present time, though only one-third of them are nominally of this description, a considerable number of the remainder are Presbyterian only in name, and if not prevented by counter influences, would probably change their order. Possibly three Presbyteries might be selected who are sufficiently Presbyterian in their character and feelings, to constitute a regular Synod; but, taken as a whole, we are inclined to the opinion that, rather than give

up the plan of union, they would secede from the Presbyterian church, and either perpetuate a kind of mixed Presbyterianism, or become Congregational altogether.

In conclusion, we have only to observe, that unless those brethren who are disposed to object to the proceedings of the last Assembly can show us "a more excellent way" for reforming the church than that which has been adopted, we are bound to sustain the Assembly in what they have done; and let those individuals and Presbyteries (if there be any such) who desire to be excepted, take the necessary steps for this purpose; while those who prefer to remain as they are can operate by themselves. It gives me pleasure to know, that there is so large a number in those Synods who are advocates for truth and good order; and it may, perhaps, be more for the advancement of Christ's kingdom, for them to remain where they are (if they feel inclined to such a course) than to break off from their present connection. The acts of the last General Assembly have given an impulse in favor of truth, which has extended to every part of the church; not excepting those portions of it which have been disowned. The present is therefore a favorable opportunity for those brethren of this character, whom the providence of God has placed in those Synods, to exert themselves for the suppression and correction of error and irregularities. With the Divine blessing on their efforts, they have more ground to hope for success than at any former period for ten years past. In this view of the subject, if in no other, they may acquiesce with cheerfulness in the proceedings of the Assembly; and hereafter, when we trust they will see, as the final result of those measures, that interesting part of the Saviour's heritage restored to the purity and loveliness of primitive Christianity, they will not only approve, but revert to them with devout gratitude to God.

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